

“Abraham: No Doc Ock” Hebrews 11:8-16

Context: The author defines faith as two conditions with two results: (1) a heart condition that stands under, supports, and results in hope and (2) a heart condition so convinced of unseen divine reality that it results in actions based on that conviction. The author proceeds with a series of examples from Old Testament saints to show what faith looks like in real life in order to persuade the readers away from apostatizing back to their former Jewish lifestyle of ritual. These examples culminate in Jesus who is the perfect example of faith as well as its perfecter. The culmination is found in the pivotal verses that sum up the basic purpose of the book, that is, ‘to cast off any weight or entangling sin by fixing the reader’s eyes upon Jesus, the initiator and perfecter of faith’ (cf. Heb. 12:1-3).

Life Principle: God rewards those who have Godly desires with eternal preparations of a Godly heart (cf. Heb. 11:16).

1. Abraham’s substance – Hebrews 11:8-10

Abraham’s faith exemplifies Hebrews 11:1 by responding to God’s revelation and expecting that God would make good on His promise of providing a dwelling place and offspring to inherit it. Abraham’s conviction resulted in wandering about in a place he had never seen. His abandonment of the secular city for nomadic existence testified that he trusted God, who designs and builds a better dwelling, the New Jerusalem. This made him a foreigner to the culture of this world and a friend of God.

2. Abraham’s conviction – Hebrews 11:11-16

Using a different preposition that intimates a clinging to faith, the author returns to an emphasis on better spiritual realities that transcend the lesser physical ones. By their actions, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob confessed their faith in God’s promise that they would live with Him as citizens of heaven. Like Abraham, who saw Moriah (a symbol of heaven) at a distance, all died. Earth, her customs, and her destiny were not their hope. Their heated passion and habits to stretch out toward God made them strangers and outsiders to all who cling to this world as their ultimate concern. In seasons of temptation, the patriarchs neither turned back to Haran or Ur in reminiscence nor in actions. God so delights in such God-seekers and that He has made the necessary preparations for their heavenly reward in their lives here and in their resurrected lives of the future.

For Further Study:

- The Hebrew Abraham narrative begins with Abraham’s calling. **As a Bible study method**, look up this account using your Bible’s column cross references (i.e. Genesis 12:1ff cp. Acts 7:2ff) and <http://www.truthnet.org/biblicalarcheology/3/Patriarchalperiod2.htm>. What cities did Abraham leave and what gods did his father most likely worship (Joshua 24:2)? What does the secular city represent politically, religiously, and economically (i.e. Genesis 11:4ff; cf. also Kittel’s *TDNT* v. 7:516ff)? What significance does Abraham being a nomad have to do with leaving Haran in response to God’s call (cp. Hebrews 11:9)? What does Abraham’s lifestyle have to do with you as his heir (cp. Romans 4:13-5:5)?
- Hebrews 11:10, 14, and 16 describe strong emotional attachment resulting from the faith of the heirs of God’s promise. What three emotions are described in these verses? What is the promise that has evoked these emotions? What evidence of the seen encourages them to believe the unseen? What evidence of God’s promises in the seen of your life encourages you to continue toward the unseen city of God promised to you?
- Hebrews 11:8, 10, and 16 speak of an inheritance of a city designed and prepared by God. Our full doctrinal statement professes faith in that same inheritance (see our [doctrinal statement](#) ‘On Last Things’ under **what we believe**, footnote 9). List some characteristics of the New Jerusalem that provoke you to sojourn toward it (cf. Revelation 21:2-27; 3:12). List some characteristics of the secular city symbolized by Babylon that reflect secular lifestyles today (cp. Revelation 18:2-14). Which characteristics best describe where you are most comfortable living? Is there anything that makes the New Jerusalem any more desirable to you than the secular city in which you live?

Transformation exercise:

Hebrews 11:16 commends those who stretch out toward God. Begin your morning stretch with at least 5 minutes praying (e.g., the Lord’s Prayer) and your daily stretch of bringing a glimpse of New Jerusalem to someone tired of Babylon.